ASSESSING THE TRANSPORTATION NEEDS OF WELFARE-TO-WORK PARTICIPANTS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

EXECUTIVE REPORT

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Summary

On June 15, 1999 the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors approved the Los Angeles County CalWORKs Transportation Plan. The Transportation Plan, prepared by the Department of Public Social Services, outlines a strategy and identifies projects to improve the mobility of CalWORKs participants as they travel to and from welfare-to-work activities, child-care and other supportive services.

Central to the approach envisioned by the Transportation Plan, was the need for a comprehensive needs assessment to determine the nature and depth of the transportation requirements of the welfare population. As a result, the Transportation Plan directed the Chief Administrative Office, Urban Research Division (URD) to perform a transportation needs assessment. The primary goal of the CalWORKs Transportation Needs Assessment (CTNA) is to identify the transportation barriers that prevent participants from transitioning to self-sufficiency. The core of that analysis is presented in this Executive Report.

Through a comprehensive research design, the transportation needs of the welfare-to-work population were identified, and matched against available transportation services in Los Angeles County. The gaps that were identified center around four major themes: Neighborhood Deficiencies, Mode of Transportation Deficiencies, Family-related Trip Deficiencies, and Welfare-to-Work Stage Deficiencies.

The main findings of this report are presented below:

Neighborhood Deficiencies

Neighborhood deficiencies are those that limit a participant's chances of securing employment, based upon the accessibility characteristics of the neighborhoods in which they live. Accessibility is measured by access to transit, and access to available jobs for which the participant may be qualified.

The analysis focuses on the residential locations of the welfare-to-work population, and the likely employment locations. Because of the relative paucity of jobs in close proximity to the neighborhoods of the GAIN population, participants will need to travel outside of their neighborhoods for employment.

The GAIN participants who rely on public transit experience the greatest difficulties, although the degree of difficulty will depend upon the level of transit service within the neighborhood, and the time of day in which travel is required.

The probability of securing employment is based in part upon the proximity and accessibility of jobs available to GAIN participants. While the neighborhoods that have the highest concentrations of the welfare-to-work population are also relatively job accessible, participants who live outside of these job accessible areas will experience greater transportation related difficulties.

The analysis indicates that roughly thirty-six percent of the current GAIN population lives in areas with low transit accessibility, and with low accessibility to jobs. For these individuals, transportation requirements are considerably more difficult based solely on where they live.

Mode of Transportation Deficiencies

Modal transportation deficiencies exist where the demand for a particular mode of transport is greater than the supply, and include the problems that result from that gap. Three separate modes were identified in the course of this study: those who drive private autos, those who take transit, and those who ride as a passenger in a private auto.

Among the welfare-to-work population, car owners are a relatively "privileged" subgroup, experiencing the fewest difficulties, and reporting the fewest transportation barriers. Additionally, car ownership is strongly correlated with employment status, and increases the likelihood of employment.

Because of the flexibility that auto travel affords, there is a large demand for travel by car among those without regular access to a private automobile. On a typical day, 24 percent of the adult GAIN population makes a trip as a passenger, a figure only slightly lower than the number of transit trips made by the GAIN population. The greatest demand for passenger trips is in those areas characterized by low transit service, in effect substituting for public transit.

To meet this demand for passenger trips, a number of participants rely on an informal system that offers rides for a fee. Such informal carpools may represent a cost-effective response to the relative lack of existing services.

Those who rely on public transit report the greatest difficulties in all stages of the welfare-to-work process. Relative to those who travel by car, transit users were twice as likely to say their commutes were difficult, and that transportation problems made it hard to find or keep a job.

Family-related Trip Deficiencies

GAIN participants, like other low-income single parents, have difficulty balancing work-related travel with family obligations. Welfare-to-work requirements themselves increase a participant's need for and use of childcare, the most common type involving friends and relatives, and other license-exempt providers. While distances to childcare are usually not very long, travel to childcare is difficult for some participants, particularly those in the job-search phase and those who rely on public transit.

Almost three-quarters of participants made a health-related trip in the previous six months, with one half of respondents perceiving transportation as a problem to receiving health care. Additionally, around one third stated that lack of transportation had prevented them from receiving health care in the past. However, when participants can plan their health-related trips in advance, they generally do not view transportation as a major problem. They do however,

express great concern in dealing with children's emergencies while they are at work or involved in job search, especially without access to a reliable car.

Welfare-to-Work Stage Deficiencies

By far and away, welfare-to-work participants face the greatest transportation difficulties during the job search stage. The job search phase is characterized by a high degree of complexity and uncertainty in transportation as participants make an increased number of trips, travel to unfamiliar areas, and make new arrangements for family obligations. All of these factors contribute to a period that is highly stressful and difficult for participants.

The requirements of Job Club impose travel demands on participants that are difficult to meet even with adequate transportation. Three-fifths of those using transit and almost one-third of those using cars find travel for job search difficult. Strategic transportation assistance and innovative programs at this stage could possibly yield very positive results, and help participants move into employment.

Conclusion

By identifying the major gaps and unmet needs, programs and policies can be specifically targeted to the most critical of these needs, to effectively remove as many barriers as possible given existing resources. This report is designed to lay the foundation for these subsequent policy initiatives.

Introduction

On June 15, 1999 the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors approved the Los Angeles County CalWORKs Transportation Plan. The Transportation Plan, prepared by the Department of Public Social Services, outlines a strategy and identifies projects to improve the mobility of CalWORKs participants as they travel to and from welfare-to-work activities, child-care and other supportive services.

Central to the approach envisioned by the Transportation Plan, was the need for a comprehensive needs assessment to determine the nature and depth of the transportation requirements of the welfare population. As a result, the Transportation Plan directed the Chief Administrative Office, Urban Research Division (URD) to perform a transportation needs assessment. The primary goal of the CalWORKs Transportation Needs Assessment (CTNA) is to identify the transportation barriers that prevent participants from transitioning to self-sufficiency. The following objectives were identified:

- Document the transportation needs of CalWORKs participants
- Inventory the existing transportation resources in Los Angeles County
- Match participant needs to existing resources
- Identify areas that are not served or are under-served for welfare-related trips
- Identify other deficiencies of the existing transportation system with respect to the County welfare-to-work population

The Urban Research Division assembled a broad range of researchers and practitioners in the transportation field to assist them in this effort. In addition, the design and conduct of the study was reviewed by a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) composed of members of the Transportation Interagency Task Force (TIATF).

The design of the needs assessment was comprehensive, and involved a complementary set of research methods, including focus groups, surveys, transportation modeling, and analyses utilizing geographic information systems and transportation system inventories.

The results of that effort are presented in two separate reports. The first, an Executive Report, presents the main findings of the project, with a particular emphasis on the major deficiencies identified throughout the research.

The second report is more comprehensive, and presents detailed findings associated with the survey and other analyses conducted in the process of identifying the transportation needs of the welfare-to-work population. In addition, accompanying the larger report are a series of technical appendices which fully document the methods used in the analyses conducted as part of the project.

Taken together, these reports present a wealth of information, and a rich picture of the transportation needs, behaviors, and deficiencies associated with the GAIN[1] population as they transition to self-sufficiency.

Deficiency Analysis

Because the primary purpose of the needs assessment is to identify the transportation barriers faced by the welfare-to-work population as they move through the GAIN program, this Executive Report highlights the major deficiencies in existing transportation resources in Los Angeles County. By identifying the major gaps and unmet needs, programs and policies can be specifically targeted to the most critical of those needs, to effectively remove as many barriers as possible given existing resources. This report is specifically designed to lay the foundation for subsequent policy initiatives.

To identify the full extent of the transportation needs and requirements of the welfare-to-work population, the research team conducted an extensive survey (1645 respondents) among GAIN participants to identify existing travel behaviors and travel patterns. Additionally, a series of focus groups were conducted at GAIN offices around the County, to provide an in-depth understanding of participants travel experiences, as they negotiate the transition to work. Together with detailed transportation modeling, these analyses were used to identify the basic transportation related needs of the welfare-to-work population.

These needs were matched against detailed information on the availability of various transportation services in Los Angeles County. These services included not just public transit (bus and rail) resources, but attempted to capture the full range of transportation services including carpools and vanpools, specialized transportation services, and other more informal means of transportation.

By comparing the geographically specific needs of the welfare-to-work population against the available services, specific deficiencies were identified for Los Angeles County. These deficiencies can be grouped around four main themes:

- Neighborhood Deficiencies
- Mode of Transportation Deficiencies
- Family-related Trip Deficiencies
- Welfare-to-Work Stage Deficiencies

Each are detailed in the sections that follow.

Neighborhood Deficiencies

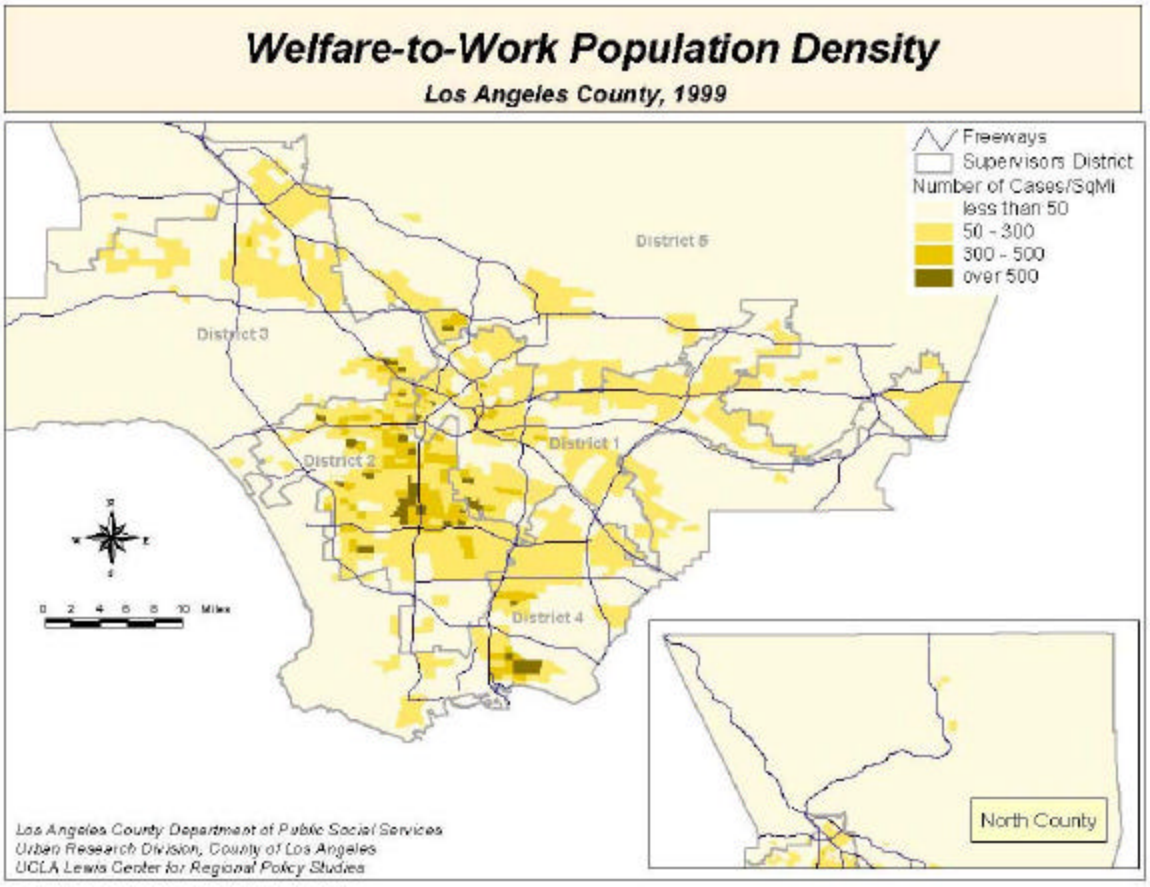
Neighborhood deficiencies are those that limit a participant's chances of securing employment, based upon the accessibility characteristics of the neighborhoods in which they live. Accessibility here is measured by access to transit, and access to available jobs for which the participant may be qualified. These deficiencies are identified by looking at where the current welfare-to-work population lives, where they are likely to work, and what services are available to meet those needs.

- **The analysis that follows indicates that roughly 36 percent of the current GAIN population live in areas with low transit accessibility, and with low accessibility to jobs. For these individuals, their transportation requirements are considerably more difficult based solely on where they live.**

Home to Work

The analysis begins by looking at where the GAIN population currently resides. When the home locations of the current welfare-to-work population in Los Angeles County are mapped, as in Figure 1, it is apparent that they are relatively concentrated in the central portion of the County. The heaviest concentrations are located along the Harbor (110) Freeway between the 10 (Santa Monica) and 105 (Anderson) freeways, with other significant clusters located in Long Beach, Hollywood, and Glendale.

Figure 1

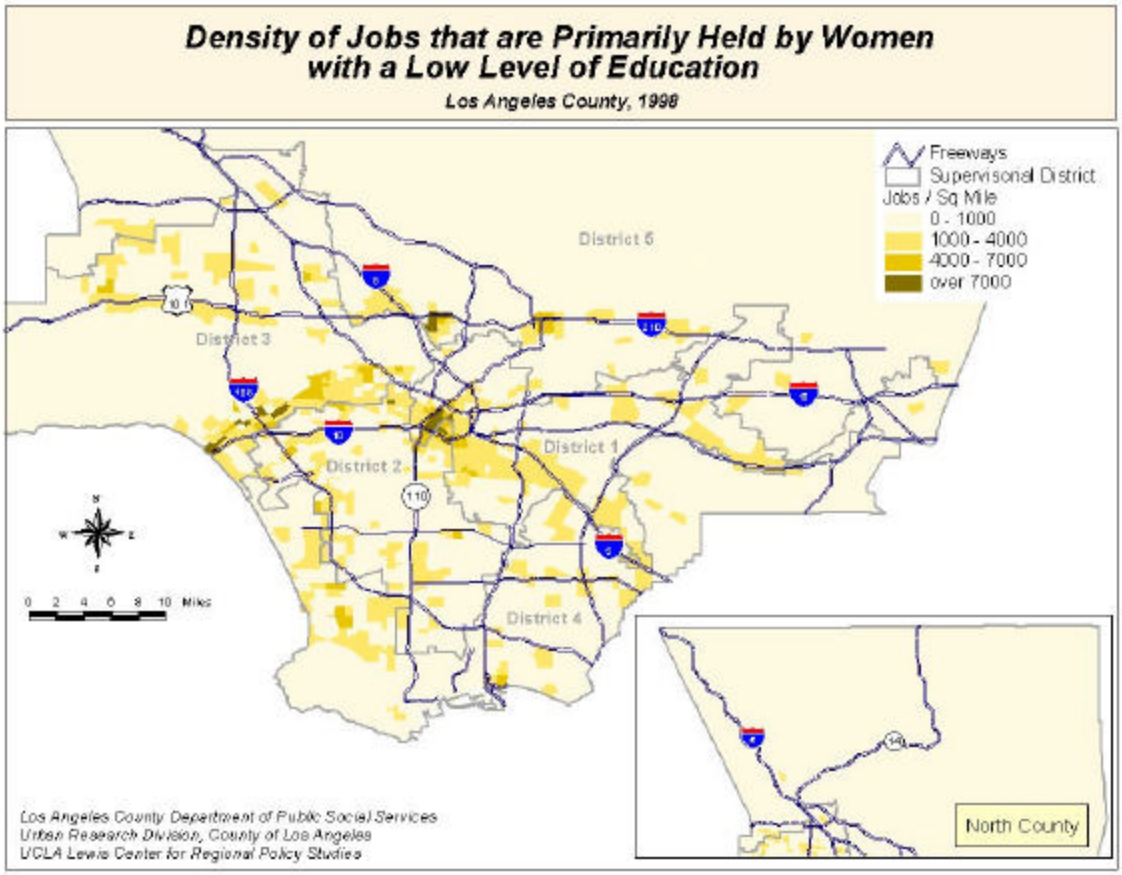


It is from these residential locations that we determine the specific transportation needs and requirements associated with access to jobs, childcare, and health-care services. For the purposes of ensuring entry into the work force, the location of employment constitutes the most important of these opportunities. Accordingly, the next step focuses on the geographic location of the jobs available to the welfare-to-work population.

It is important to correctly identify the specific types of jobs and opportunities available to these workers. They will not qualify for all job opportunities, and consequently, identifying the specific occupations in which the GAIN population will likely find employment is important to accurately predict home to work travel.

Two primary characteristics stand out: just over 82 percent of the GAIN population are women, and the majority (68 percent), have a high school education or less. As a result, occupational survey data was used to identify those jobs in which 50 percent or more of workers had less than a high school education, and in which more than 50 percent were women. From this analysis, the location of the greatest numbers of such jobs was identified, and displayed on Figure 2. Several important findings follow from this analysis.

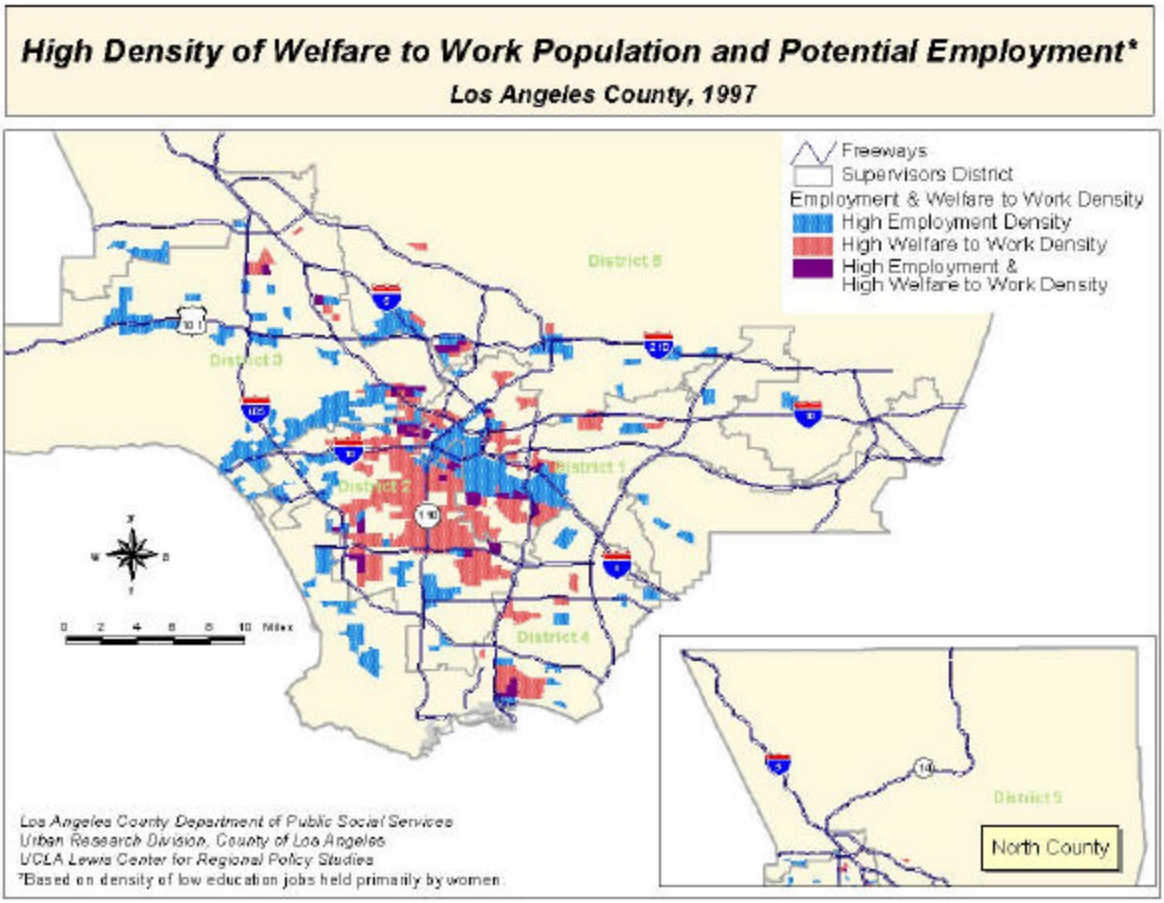
Figure 2



First, locations with high concentrations of low education, female majority jobs, generally do not overlap with the areas where welfare participants live (see Figure 3). There will be fewer job opportunities close to home for the GAIN population, which is important, because previous studies have suggested that greater neighborhood availability of jobs is correlated with lower rates of welfare usage.

- **Because of the pattern of employment in Los Angeles County, the transportation requirements are more complex, as welfare-to-work participants have to travel outside of their immediate neighborhoods for employment.**

Figure 3



At the same time, the distances are not as significant. While there are not a large number of jobs within the proximate neighborhoods, there are large numbers of potential jobs within moderately close distances.

- **The home to work travel distance of the current GAIN population who are employed is just over seven miles. This is less than the average commute for the general population (12-13 miles).** [2]

The largest concentrations of low education, female majority jobs occur just east of downtown Los Angeles, in Pasadena and Glendale, and along a corridor from Downtown west to Santa Monica, including portions of Hollywood and West Los Angeles.

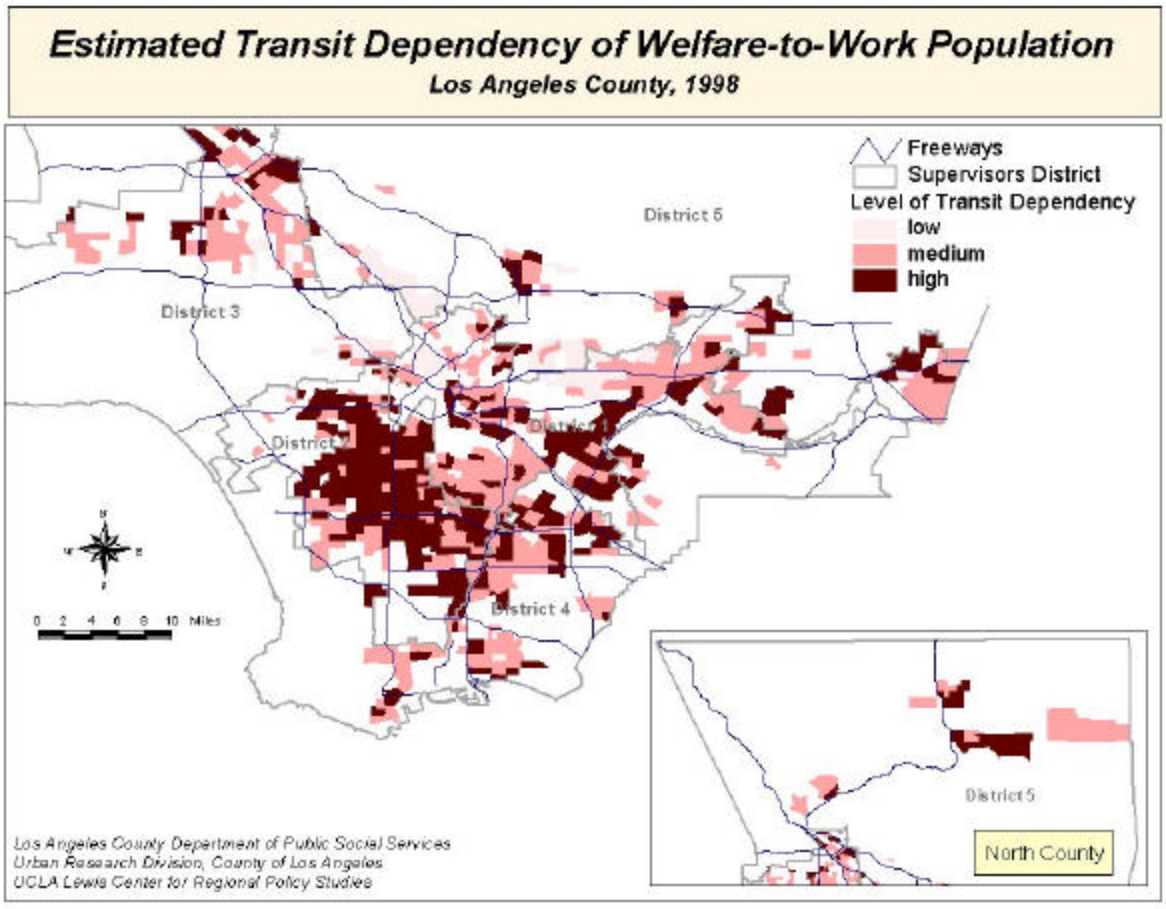
Transit Utilization

Having identified the home and potential work locations, we now turn to the method of travel between these two locations. The welfare-to-work population relies on a variety of transportation options for traveling, and the mode of travel affects the ease or difficulty encountered in accessing jobs throughout Los Angeles County.

- **Participants who travel by car report the fewest difficulties, while the greatest difficulties are experienced by those who rely on public transit**.

Consequently, we focus upon the transit dependent, identifying the location of the largest numbers of persons who rely on public buses for transportation. Not surprisingly, there is a high level of correspondence between the location of the transit dependent, and the residential location of the welfare-to-work population (see Figure 4).

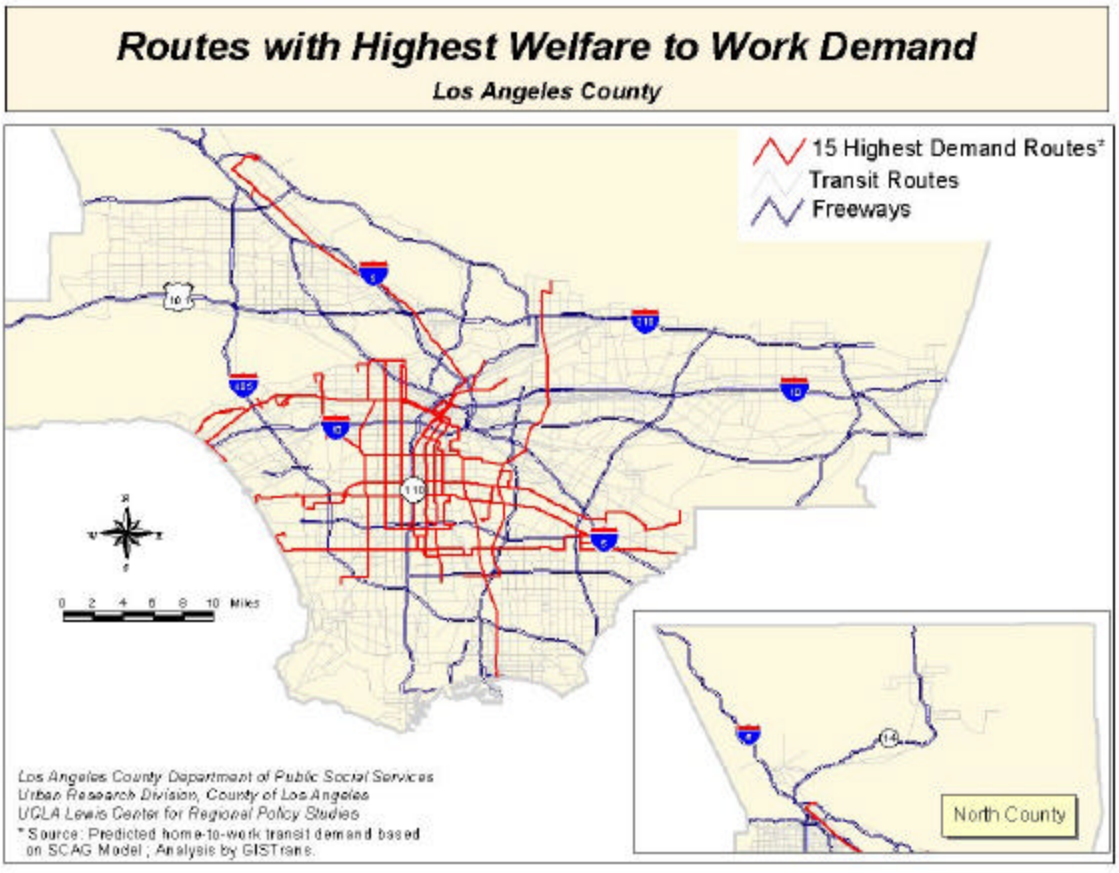
Figure 4



As a next step, the residential locations of the welfare-to-work population together with the predicted employment locations were utilized in a regional transportation demand model. This transportation modeling was used to determine the likely method of travel (auto, transit, or other)

for the home to work trip, as well as the specific public transit routes that will receive the highest levels of demand. The results of this analysis are presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5



The top fifteen public transit routes account for roughly 44 percent of all of the predicted home to work transit trips of the welfare-to-work population. This is consistent with other data collected at MTA, which has found that the top twenty routes (out of a total of 127 routes) account for just under 50 percent of the total ridership.[3]

The demand for transit services among the welfare-to-work population can now be compared to the level of available service in Los Angeles County. At an aggregate level, our findings indicate that there are significant differences among areas within Los Angeles County. As is shown in Table 1, the Fourth and Fifth supervisorial districts have considerably less transit service than the other three districts. On the other hand, welfare participants – who use public transit more than other county residents – are more concentrated in the First and Second Supervisorial districts, which have relatively better levels of transit service.

Table 1
Distribution of Transit Access by Supervisorial District, Welfare Recipients, Los Angeles County 1999

Measures of Transit Access	Supervisorial District				
	First (%)	Second (%)	Third (%)	Fourth (%)	Fifth (%)
At least one bus stop within 1/4 mile*	90	95	91	85	65
Average number of stops within 1/4 mile	26	19	22	16	13
Level of Transit Service*					
Low	17	10	14	47	65
Medium	54	53	57	50	28
High	29	36	28	2	7

* Statistically significant differences based on Chi Square statistical test for each row.

To examine the level of transit service by specific area, transit schedule data was obtained for all transit carriers within Los Angeles County, and the overall number of scheduled bus runs made between 6 AM and 9 AM was calculated. This AM peak period represents the most common hours in which those who work standard hours begin their morning commute. The number of bus runs traversing each area (transportation zone) within the AM peak was established, and the relative level of service availability was calculated, which appears in Figure 6.

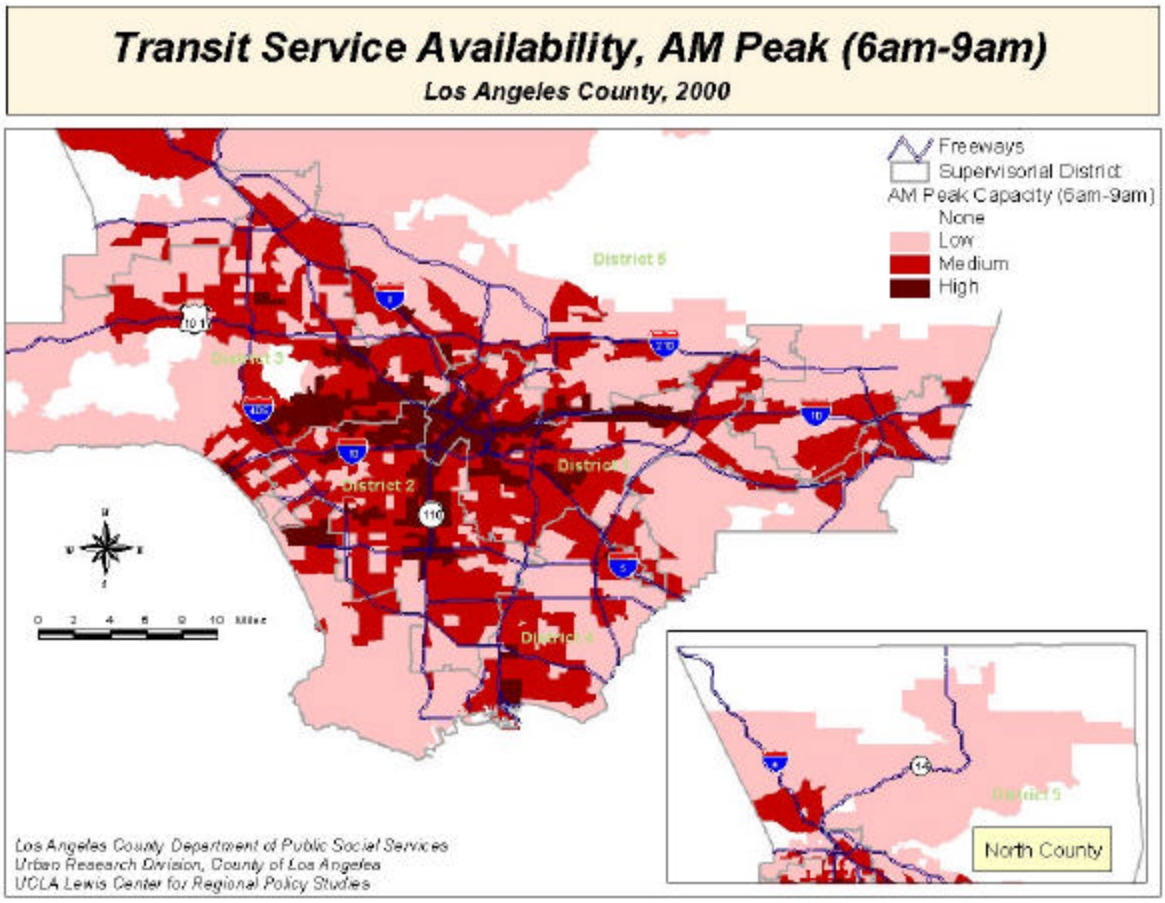
- **The locations that are characterized by relatively high levels of service availability (during the AM peak hours) overlap the areas of high concentrations of welfare-to-work participants (Figure 1), and the areas that contain high densities of low education, majority female jobs (Figure 2).**

This should not be surprising, since transit availability is generally designed around many of the same demand factors as those which characterize the welfare-to-work population: low income, low rates of auto ownership, and high population and employment density.

The pattern displayed in Figure 6 seems to indicate that the current availability of transit service is well positioned to accommodate a significant component of the transportation needs of those who do not own cars. Several measures at the aggregate level support this conclusion.

- **Roughly twenty-one percent of GAIN participants live in areas that have high levels of service availability, with 45 percent falling into the medium level of service category. An estimated thirty-five percent of the GAIN caseload resides in areas characterized by low levels of transit availability.**

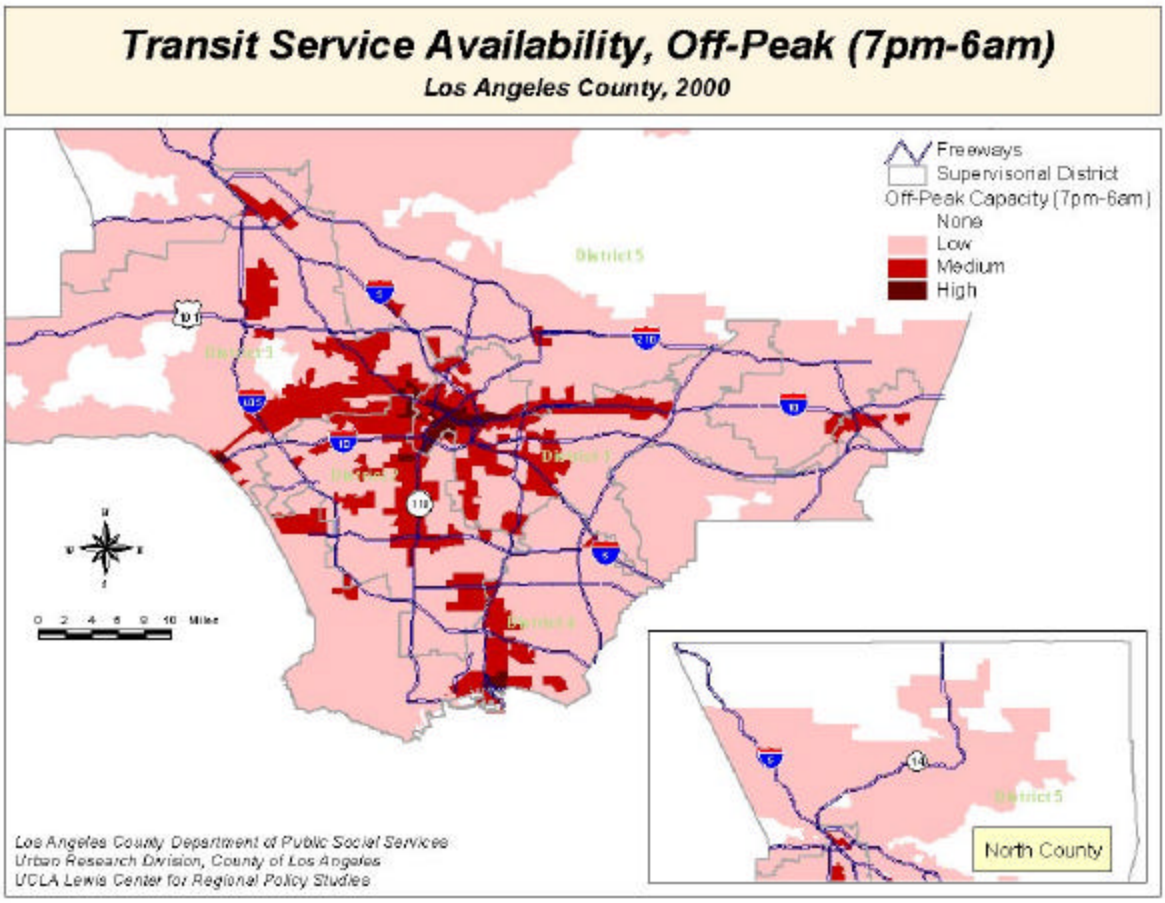
Figure 6



The analysis to this point has focused on service accessibility for the prime or peak service period. But service availability varies considerably by time of day, as we see in Figure 7, which reflects service in the off-peak period. Here only 31 percent of the current GAIN population live in areas characterized by high or medium levels of transit service.

- **Fifty-seven percent of the GAIN population surveyed indicated they worked at least occasionally during weekends, and 40 percent of those who worked a fixed schedule did not start work in the normal (6 AM to 9 AM) work day period, around which most transit service is based. For these workers, existing transit services may not be sufficient, and is likely reflected in the fact that 52 percent of GAIN participants who travel to work by transit report difficulty in their commute**.

Figure 7



Job Accessibility

Transit accessibility defines one half of the equation relating to neighborhood based deficiencies. The other side is accessibility to jobs. The probability of securing employment is based on the proximity and accessibility of low education, female majority jobs available to the welfare-to-work participant. This varies considerably across the County, and significantly by mode of transport.

In the first instance, job accessibility was calculated for those participants who rely on transit. The number of low education, female majority jobs that are accessible within a thirty-minute transit trip (roughly corresponding to one hour when walk time to stop and wait time are factored in) was calculated for each transportation zone in Los Angeles County. Relative job accessibility was then calculated and appears in Figure 8.

- **The areas of greatest job accessibility by transit roughly correspond to the areas of highest concentration of the welfare-to-work population. On the other hand, recipients who live outside of these central areas will likely find considerably fewer employment opportunities within a reasonable proximity, and the transportation requirements associated with their job search will be more problematic.**

Figure 8

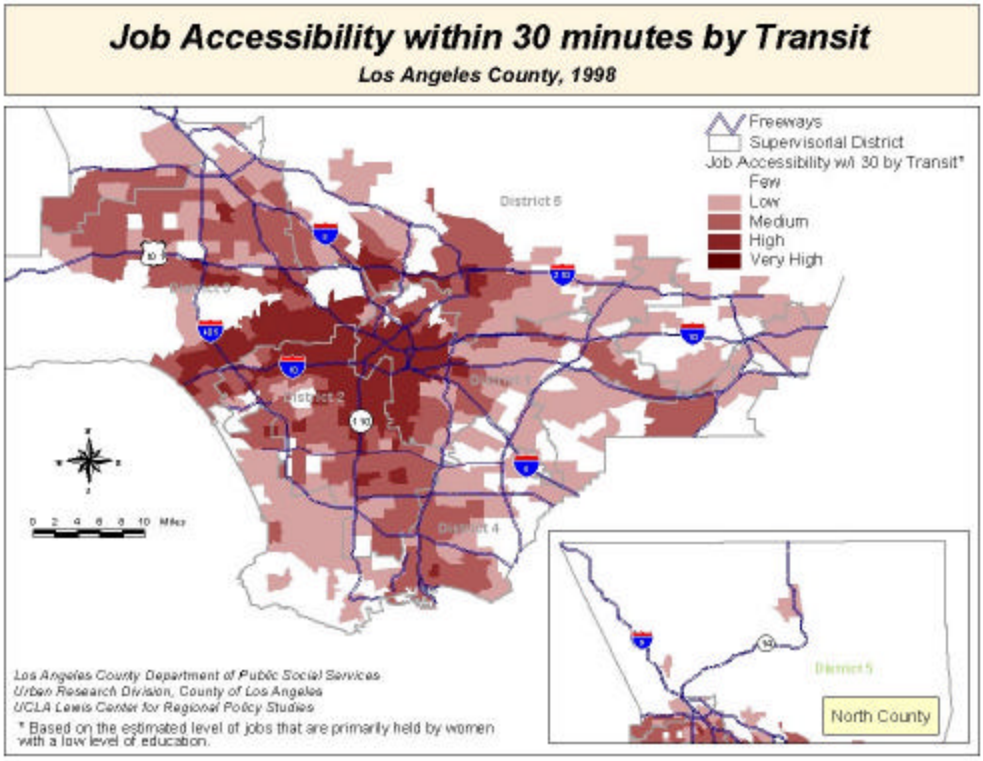
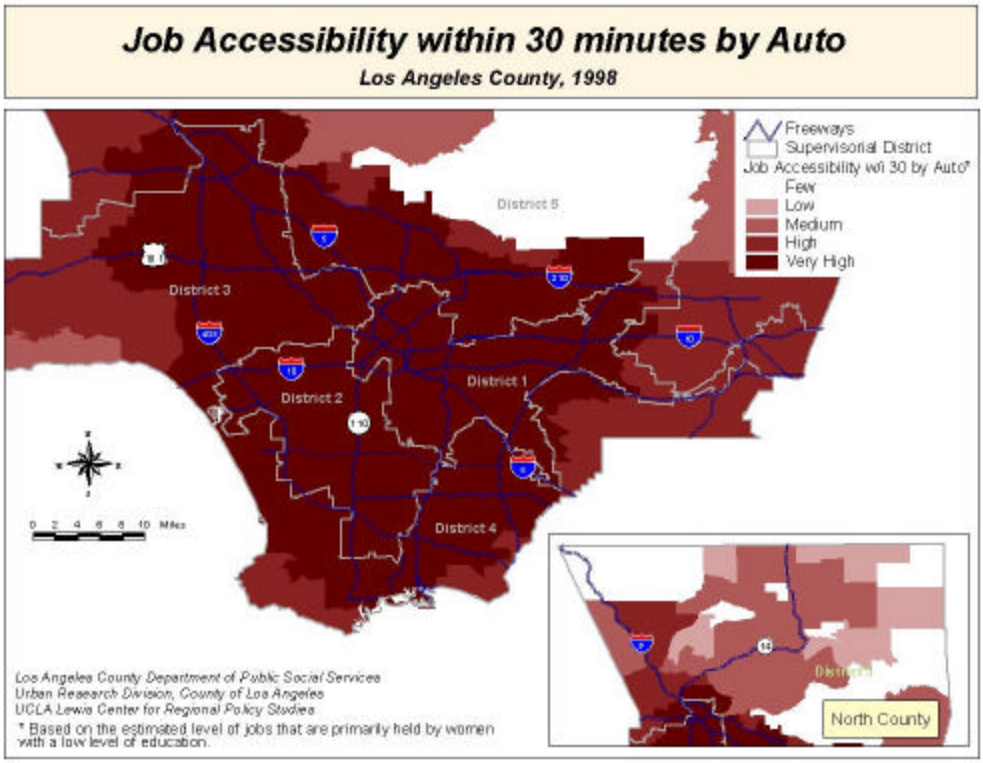


Figure 9

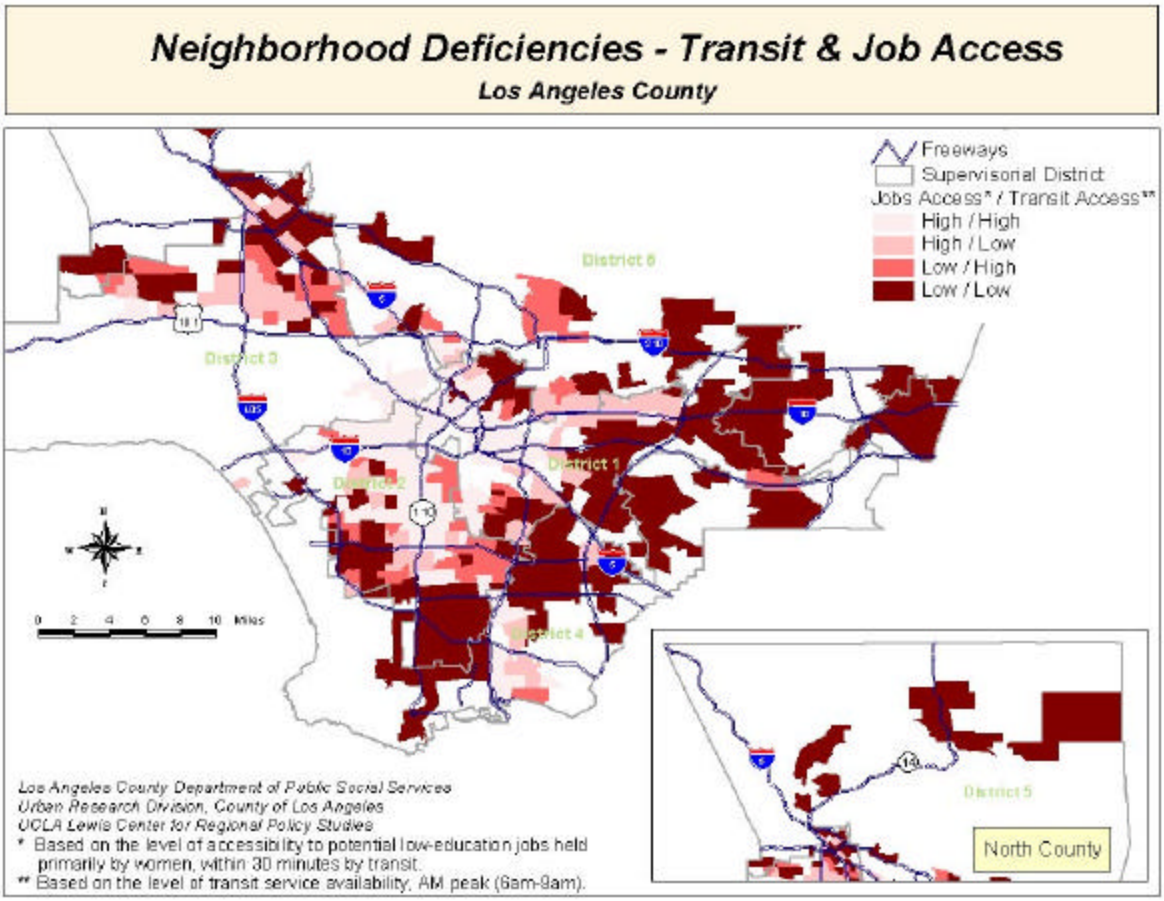


The number of low education, female majority jobs accessible for those who travel by car is significantly expanded as we see in Figure 9. This serves to dramatically highlight the relative advantage of those who own cars or have access to automobiles in their job search.

Areas of Deficiency

It is now possible to begin to bring together various components of this analysis, and identify those neighborhoods in which welfare-to-work participants are severely handicapped. Figure 10 highlights those areas of the County with low transit service availability, and low accessibility to jobs. The areas of darkest shading are those in which there is an overlap in terms of accessibility: low transit service and low accessibility to jobs.

Figure 10



- **It is in these areas where we expect the welfare-to-work participants to have the most difficulty in their job search and eventual journey to work. It is estimated that roughly 36 percent of the entire welfare-to-work caseload fall into these areas of the County.**

As the map indicates, these areas are predominantly concentrated in a wide band in the southeastern section of the County, extending from Long Beach to Pomona, with large concentrations in the San Gabriel Valley, and additional areas in the northern and western San Fernando Valley. It is in precisely these areas where transit service is more limited, and access to low education, female majority jobs remains the most restricted.

- **Extension of existing fixed route public transit services to these areas would likely prove cost prohibitive, and therefore, addressing these neighborhood deficiencies will require more creative transportation solutions.**

Mode of Transportation Deficiencies

Modal transportation deficiencies exist where the demand for a particular mode of transport is greater than the supply, and include the problems that result from that gap. Three separate modes were highlighted in the course of this study: those who drive private autos, those who take transit, and those who ride as a passenger in a private auto. Participants relying on each mode have considerably different transportation experiences and needs, and will have greater or lesser chances of success in meeting employment requirements.

General Travel Patterns

Our research findings indicate that while the travel patterns of the GAIN population are considerably different from the population of working age adults, they closely resemble the travel characteristics of other low-income single parents (see Table 2).

Table 2
Comparison of Trip Mode, CTNA Survey & 1995 Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey (NPTS)

	All working-age adults (NPTS) (%)	Low-income single parents (NPTS) (%)	LA GAIN Participants (CTNA) (%)
Trip Mode			
Car Driver	76	50	48
Car Passenger	16	22	16
Public Transit	3	14	18
Walk	4	13	16
Other	1	2	1
Car Ownership			
Own a Car	92	53	55
Do Not Own a Car	8	47	45

Source: Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey, U.S. Department of Transportation, 1995, and CTNA survey, 2000.

GAIN participants are more likely to rely on transit and to walk than the population of all working age adults. This is reflected in the fact that 64 percent of all trips taken by the GAIN population are by car, versus 72 percent for low-income single parents, and fully 92 percent of all trips for all working age adults. Similarly, car ownership rates are significantly below the national average, although a relatively significant number of GAIN participants report an auto within the household (55 percent).

Car Owners

- **Among the Welfare-to-Work population, car owners are a relatively "privileged" subgroup, experiencing the fewest difficulties, and reporting the fewest transportation barriers.**

As we see in Table 3, those who engage in job search by car report the fewest difficulties, with only 29 percent reporting transportation difficulties while seeking work, versus 60 percent who job searched on public transit. Among those who work, a similar situation is observed: those who commute by public transit report more difficulties than those who use cars.

The relative advantages of traveling by car are apparent across all categories surveyed: ease of transport to child-care, health care, Job Clubs and other GAIN facilities.

Table 3
Travel Characteristics and Perceptions of Travel Difficulty, GAIN Participants, Los Angeles County, 2000

	Mode of Transportation Usually Used for Work or Job Search		
	Car*	**Transit**	**Other****
Job Seekers			
Travel for job search is difficult	29%	60%	41%
Transportation is a problem in finding or keeping a job	35%	61%	41%
Average distance to nearest GAIN/CalWORKs office	3.7 miles	3.0 miles	5.0 miles
Average distance to nearest Job Club	4.5 miles	4.4 miles	5.0 miles
Employed			
Commute to work is difficult	21%	52%	16%
Transportation is a problem in finding or keeping a job	31%	60%	43%
Average commute distance	8.0 miles	7.3 miles	2.8 miles
Percent traveling 11+ miles	24%	18%	5%
Estimated time starting work after leaving home[4]	67 minutes	103 minutes	66 minutes

* Indicates travel in a private vehicle as a driver or passenger.
** Most 'other' trips were walking trips, but this also includes trips made by bicycle and taxi.

- **Car ownership is highly correlated with employment status, and increases the likelihood of employment. Our survey results show that 64 percent of participants with unlimited access to an automobile were employed, versus 44 percent for those who had either limited or no access to an automobile.**

A number of recent studies have shown that providing regular access to a reliable vehicle is one of the most effective means of increasing steady employment among participants. A study of California AFDC data finds that car ownership greatly increases both the earnings and likelihood of employment.[5] A second study using similar data shows that automobile ownership increases the likelihood of finding employment and exiting welfare.[6] Car ownership can significantly expand the range of areas in which the participant can search for employment, and in many cases, this can increase access to better paying jobs. Overall, the research shows that car ownership decreases welfare use.[7]

Car ownership is not without problems, however. Sixty-nine percent of surveyed respondents who had a car in the household reported that it was over ten years old, leading to a series of reliability problems. Fifty-five percent indicated that they had had at least one mechanical problem over the last three months, with 23 percent reporting more than three mechanical failures over the same period. These unreliability issues may affect participants' ability to retain jobs.

With respect to auto insurance, 17 percent reported they were not covered by insurance, although we estimate that participants may be under-reporting this and that the actual percent is likely to be much higher. A recent study showed that countywide, over 30 percent of drivers are uninsured and in some areas of Los Angeles County the rate of uninsured drivers exceeds 80 percent.[8] These areas are, in most cases, the same low-income communities in which GAIN participants reside.

Because car access produces positive employment outcomes and lowers the burden of travel, it is not surprising that many recipients without a car want to purchase an automobile, and many recipients with a car want to replace their aging and unreliable vehicles. Unfortunately, car ownership is not easily attainable or maintainable because of high costs relative to available income.[9] The initial purchase, maintenance and recurring costs may hinder the ability of people transitioning from welfare to own a vehicle, while at the same time, moving into employment requires significant increase in expenditures on travel.[10] Research has shown that the single largest travel expense for most individuals is automobile ownership, maintenance, fuel and insurance; the direct costs of owning and operating a car absorb around 15 percent of low-income people's disposable income.[11]

- **While the benefits of car ownership have been demonstrated in terms of employment outcomes, the costs may be prohibitive for many GAIN participants. Due to limited public resources, car ownership and maintenance programs, while valuable, should be carefully evaluated, and targeted to individuals at specific stages in the transition to self-sufficiency if they are to be successful.**

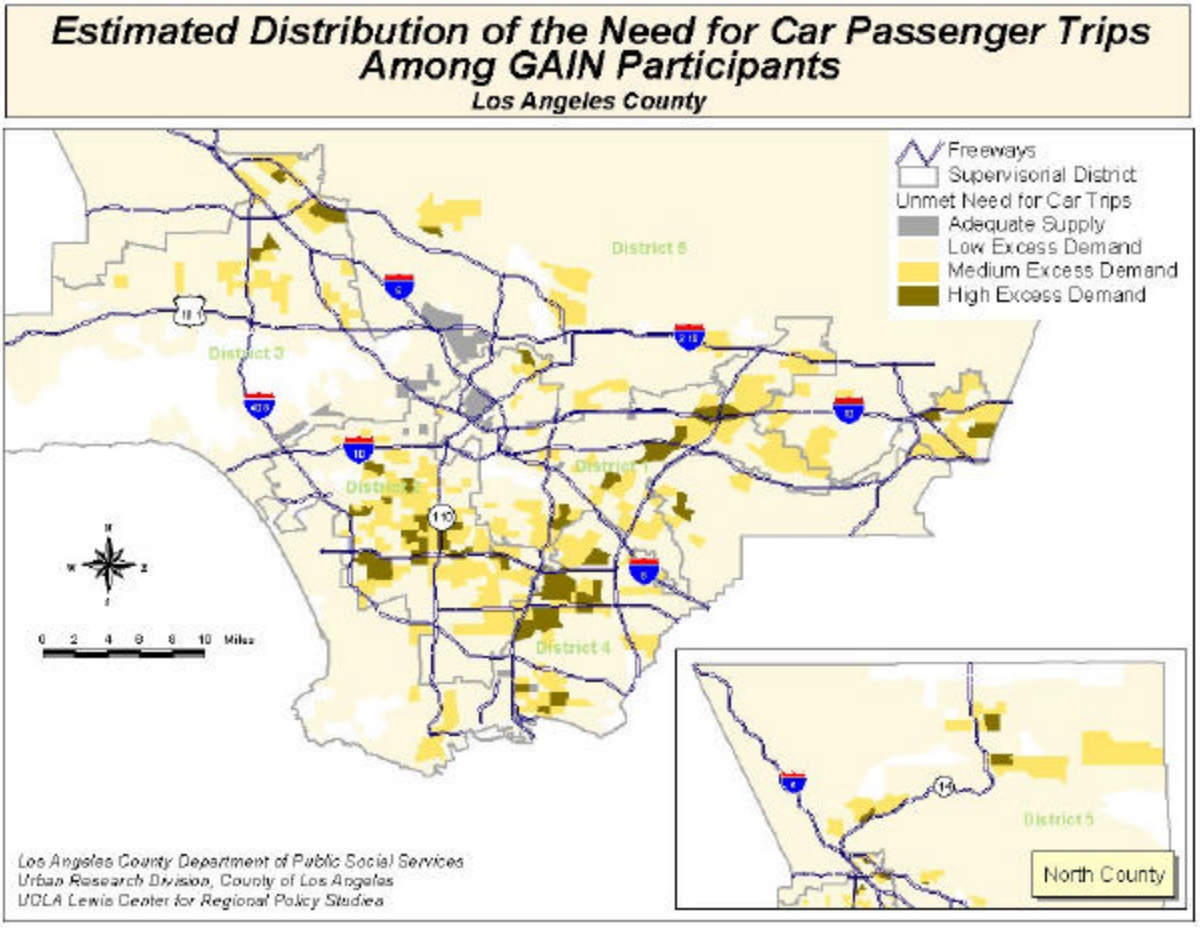
Car Passengers

The CTNA findings indicate that a significant number of participants travel as passengers in private vehicles. Both the survey and the focus groups found that, for many participants, getting a ride from a friend, relative or neighbor is an important way to look for work, transport children, go to health care services, and commute to work. Participants also used rides for other purposes,

such as shopping, going to social services, and a host of other activities. In short, being a car passenger helps those participants without access to a car meet both regular and extraordinary transportation needs.

- **On a typical day, roughly 24 percent of the adult GAIN population makes a trip as a passenger. This is only slightly lower than the number of trips made on public transit. The analysis indicates that the areas of highest demand for passenger travel are those that are characterized by low levels of existing transit service (see Figure 11).**

Figure 11



In this sense, riding in a vehicle may serve as a substitute for public transit, borne out by the fact that almost half of these auto-passengers did not take public transit in the week previous to the survey. In addition, passenger travel is a quite rational response to the relative lack of services.

At the same time, it is quite clear that this remains a less predictable and less reliable form of transportation for many of the welfare-to-work participants. There are no regularized services meant to deal with the demand for car passenger rides for this population, as opposed to the more formalized ride share programs for standard commuters.

These individuals must arrange their rides on a rather ad hoc and shifting basis, often from family, and to a lesser extent, from friends and neighbors. A number of participants rely on an informal system that offers rides for a fee. "In a study of neighborhood carpools in Los Angeles, Professor Guiliano found that the drivers of the cars are usually female and that driving their neighbors where they need to go is a source of income for them. The passengers are mostly female, have no access to a private vehicle, and are very low income. The drivers are motivated by earning extra money and by helping others. The passengers use neighborhood carpools because they offer decreased travel time, increased personal safety, increased convenience, and a low price. The price is universally $1.00 per trip."[12]

Because this is largely an informal system, it is difficult to assess how extensive it is, and how well these services are meeting the demand for car passenger rides in the communities occupied by the welfare-to-work participants.

- **It is clear that such informal car-pools and taxis may represent a cost-effective response to the relative lack of existing services, and should be acknowledged in the formulation of policy programs addressing the transportation needs of the welfare-to-work population.**

Public Transit

It is the GAIN participants who must rely on public transit who are most likely to report significant transportation difficulties. Of those surveyed, two-fifths found public transit to be a workable mode of transport. But as we have seen, 60 percent of those who use transit for job searching, and 52 percent of those who commute to work, report that their travel was difficult.

- **Relative to those who travel by car, transit users were twice as likely to say their commutes were difficult, and that transportation problems made it hard to find or keep a job.**

Among survey respondents and focus group participants alike, large numbers complained about the problems they encountered using the public transit system. Most complaints related to the level and reliability of service, and the difficulty of relying on public transit to arrive at a destination on time, whether for Job Club, job interviews or employment.

It is clear that public transit is not the preferred choice of travel for participants, because it does not enable them to cope with the complexity and uncertainty of work in combination with household related trips. Many participants expressed frustration in having to travel on the bus with small children, while others felt fearful in traveling to unknown neighborhoods for interviews or jobs. Overall, dissatisfaction with existing levels of service was quite strong among those interviewed.

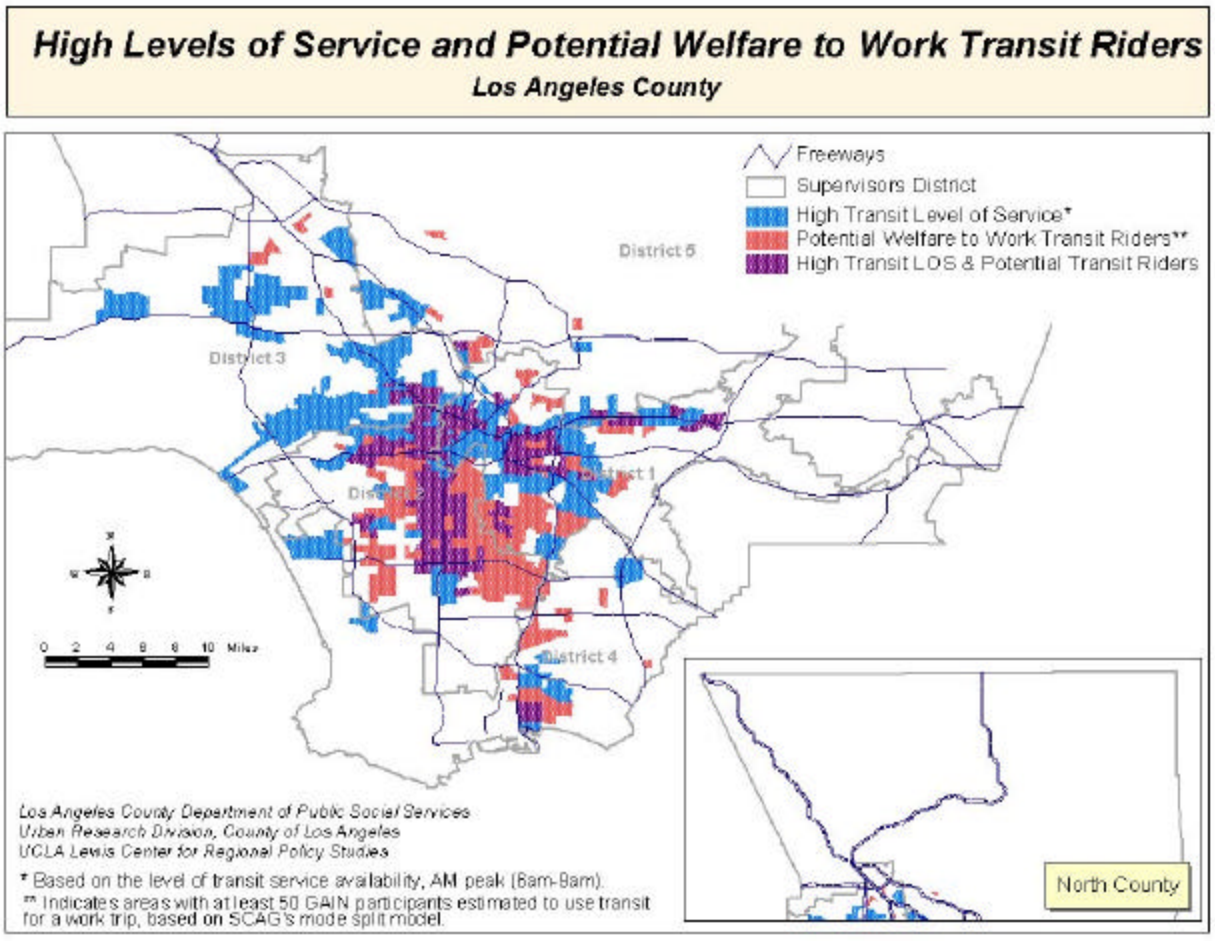
Transit related problems most frequently identified include:

- Infrequent service and waiting for buses not on schedule
- Difficulty in utilizing transit with children

- Unfamiliarity with transit routes and schedules
- Overcrowding
- Full buses passing by without stopping
- Safety

The survey respondents were asked an open-ended question which allowed them to suggest their two biggest problems with using transit. Twenty-seven percent reported that one of their biggest problems was infrequent service or waiting, 27 percent stated overcrowding, 21 percent stated the bus not running on schedule, and only 7 percent stated expense. The average wait time reported among respondents was 22.5 minutes.

Figure 12



In Figure 12, the areas in which there is a high level of demand from the welfare-to-work population are mapped together with the areas characterized by high levels of existing transit service. Those areas in red represent areas of high demand but lower levels of existing service. These areas could potentially benefit from expanded service to meet the demand for transit services. These include parts of Los Angeles City south and west of the 10 Freeway, the Lennox

and Hawthorne area, with another concentration in the cities of Lynnwood, Huntington Park, Compton, Bell and Bell Gardens, and finally in Long Beach.

When asked to rank possible public transit programs, transit riders picked more frequent service (31 percent) over other options: an emergency ride home (26 percent), a free transit pass (24 percent), or a shuttle service (19 percent). Not surprisingly, cost was a lower consideration than frequency of service, being on time, or having stops closer to one's home. Preference for more frequent service was especially high among those who live in areas that already have relatively high levels of service.

- **While more frequent service was the top choice, there was considerable interest in each of these options among participants, which suggests that with public transit, no single program would solve all of the participants' needs. It may well be that a combination of public transit related programs, including service improvements, may be needed to fully address the needs of current GAIN transit riders.**

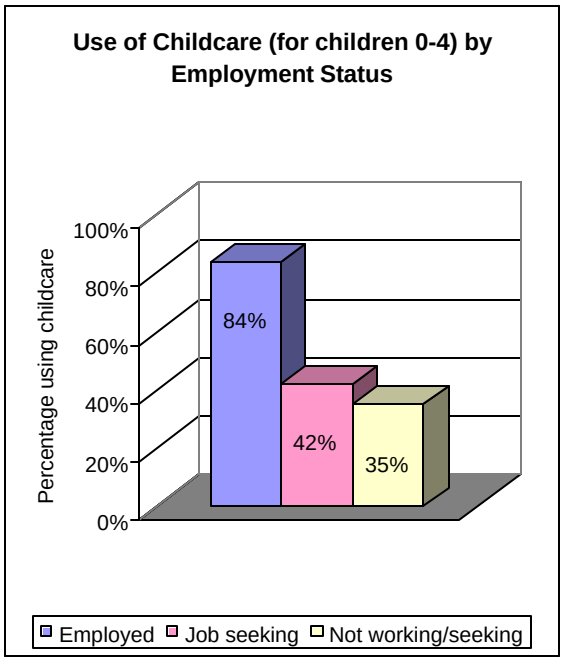
Family-Related Trip Deficiencies

Welfare-to-work participants, like other low-income single-parents, have difficulty balancing work-related travel with family obligations. For them, a typical day is not just centered around work, but includes a host of family related obligations as well. Transportation is used not only to get to and from work, but to deal with other issues, such as child care, health care, shopping, and other errands. As with most working age adults, the majority of trips made by welfare participants are to destinations other than work, and many involve trips to satisfy family needs. Because of their importance for achieving self-sufficiency, the focus in this section is on child and health care related travel, and in understanding the main transportation barriers faced by participants in relation to meeting their childcare and health care needs.

Child-care

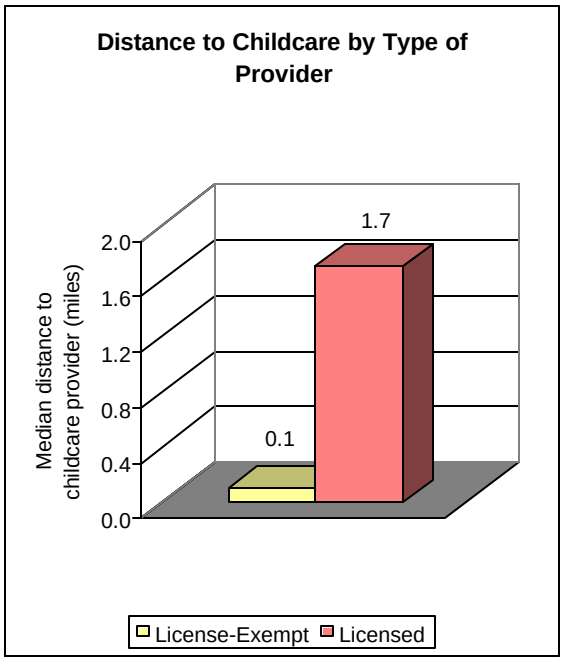
The first point to be made is that job search, and especially employment, increases a participant's need for and use of childcare for preschool children. The majority (84 percent) of employed participants use childcare for their children aged 4 and under, compared to only 42 percent of job seekers and 35 percent of those not working or searching (see Figure 13). Overall, over half of participants use some form of childcare (58 percent) for their preschoolers. The most common type of childcare involves relatives or friends caring for the children, usually license-exempt providers.

Figure 13



Source: CTNA, 2000.

Figure 14



Source: CTNA, 2000.

Although there are a variety of reasons for choosing this form of childcare (such as trusting that family or friends will adequately care for their children), for many it may also be an issue of availability of licensed care. Most welfare-to-work participants live in areas with a very low number of licensed childcare slots per child. Almost 40 percent of participants with children aged 4 or younger live in areas with less than 15 slots per 100 preschool children. As a result, welfare families may be forced to rely on license-exempt care because of limited choice. This is reinforced by the fact that the use of licensed care increases in areas where the availability is greater.

Among all families who use childcare, about one-fifth have their children cared for in their own homes and therefore do not need transportation to access childcare services. The remaining 81 percent require some means of transportation, but usually, the distance to childcare is short and in many cases, the provider is within walking distance of the participant's home. The median distance to licensed care is 1.7 miles, compared to 0.1 miles for license-exempt care (see Figure 14). This indicates that for those using license-exempt care, transportation does not seem to be a major issue in reaching childcare. However, those using licensed care must engage in a significantly longer trip.

- **Despite the fact that distance to childcare is usually not very long, travel to childcare is difficult for some participants, particularly for those in the job-search phase and those who rely on public transit. Half of participants seeking work consider travel to childcare to be difficult, as do half of those who use public transit to get to childcare.**

Welfare-to-work participants with school-aged children have different needs from parents of preschoolers. Participants' trips for job search and work often increase the amount of time these

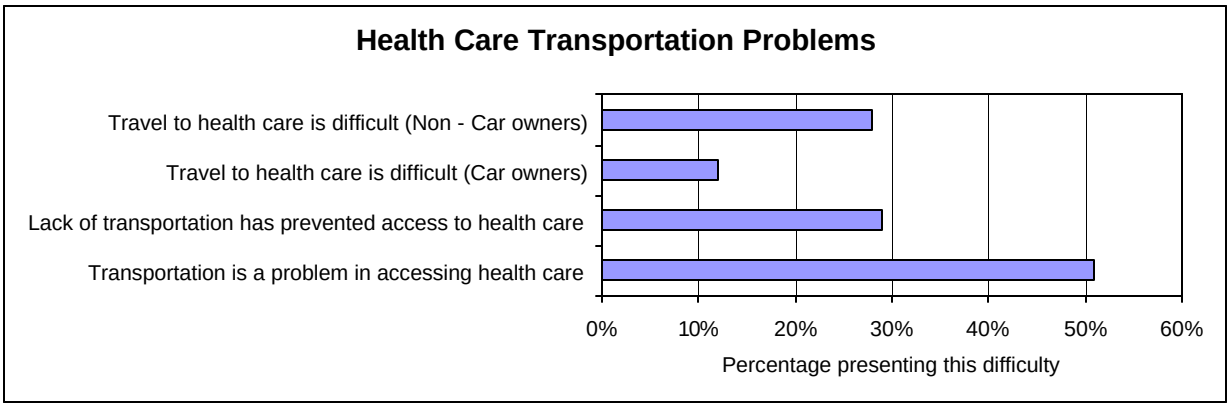
children are left unsupervised. Most of the participants reported that their school-aged children go home after school, with very few participating in after-school activities. A number of participants expressed concern about having to leave their children in this manner, and expressed a strong desire for childcare services and other after school activities for their school-aged children and teenagers.

Health-care

Ensuring access to health care facilities is important not only in moving participants to self-sufficiency, but also in helping to manage the utilization of County-provided medical services. A majority of participants (72 percent) have visited health care facilities during the past 6 months, either for a personal visit or to take a member of their family who depends upon them for transportation. At the same time, roughly half of the GAIN population reported that transportation is a problem in accessing health care, and almost one-third reported that lack of transportation had prevented them from access to health care in the past (see Figure 15).

- **Perceived difficulty of travel to health care is greater among those who do not own cars (28 percent), relative to car owners (12 percent). Additionally, when participants can plan their health-related trips in advance, they generally do not view transportation as a major problem. They do however, express great concern in dealing with children's emergencies while they are at work or involved in job searching, especially without access to a reliable car. In this regard, emergency or guaranteed ride-home programs for mothers to accommodate their children's emergencies would prove highly beneficial.**

Figure 15



Source: CTNA Survey, 2000.

A final difficulty with respect to travel to health care concerns the County's shift from the previous Medi-Cal system to the newer managed care delivery system. While the new system does allow a participant to choose their providers, and chose those close to home, many participants do not know how to navigate the complicated HMO system on their own, and are often assigned to a provider that may not be in close proximity. Accordingly, many in the focus

groups complained of having to spend considerable time traveling to health care centers, and navigating public transit to access distant medical groups.

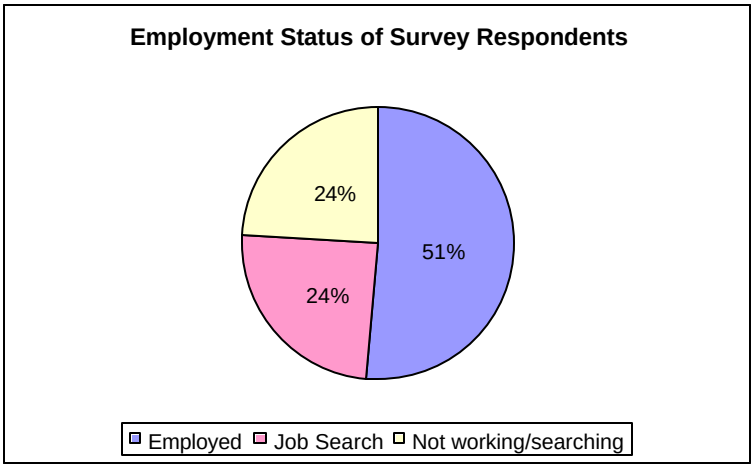
- **A more transportation-conscious marketing of health care providers, as well as providing participants with information and helping them choose providers close to home, could help solve these problems.**

In addition, many health care centers do provide shuttle services, which were viewed quite positively by participants, and such services should be encouraged whenever possible.

Deficiencies Related to Stages in the Welfare-to-Work Process

The welfare-to-work stage deficiencies are transportation difficulties and barriers that participants face in relation to their current stage in the process of moving from welfare to work. Participants in each stage will face considerably different transportation needs and requirements, and should be evaluated separately. For this analysis, we identify three main stages in this transition, based on employment status: (1) not working or seeking work, (2) job search, and (3) employment. At the time of the survey, half of GAIN participants reported that they were employed and a quarter that they were actively looking for a job; the remaining quarter were not working or seeking work (see Figure 16).[13]

Figure 16

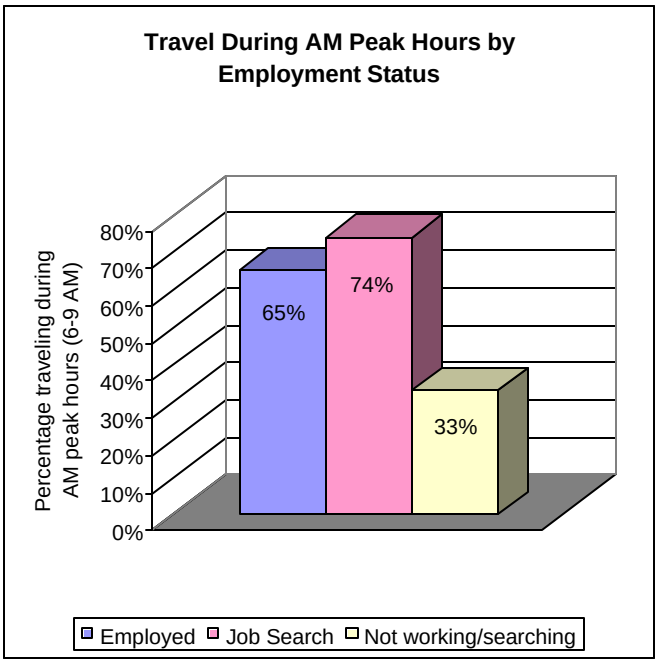


Source: CTNA Survey, 2000.

Job Search

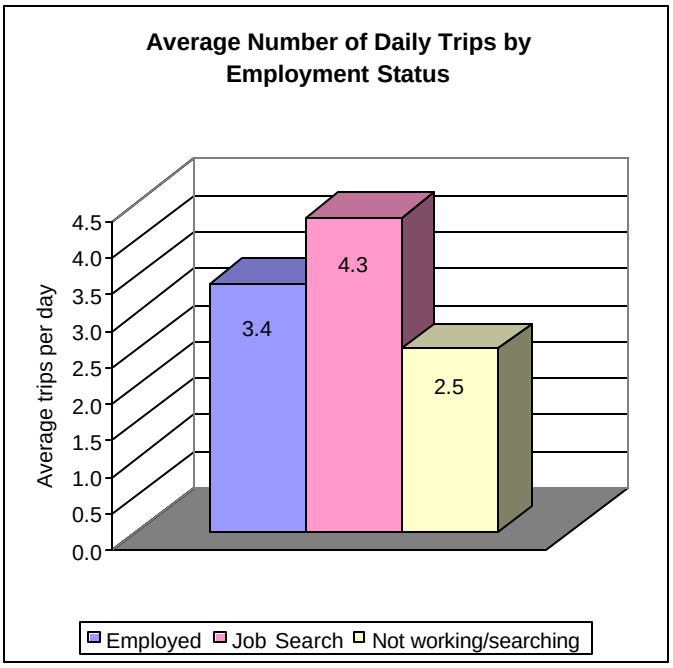
By far and away, welfare-to-work participants face the greatest transportation difficulties during the job-search stage. Job seekers make more trips per day and travel more during peak hours than those employed or those who are not working or seeking work (see Figure 17 and Figure 18). Additionally, they are less likely to have access to a car than those who are working, and are more likely to rely on public transit to conduct their job searches.

Figure 17



Source: CTNA Survey, 2000.

Figure 18



Source: CTNA Survey, 2000.

Their travel patterns and schedules are less predictable, and change daily as they travel to different job interviews or applications in areas that may be unfamiliar to them. For these and other reasons, the job search stage is likely to be difficult, and highly stressful to participants.

Most unemployed, non-exempt GAIN participants are required to enroll in Job Club, a three-week activity designed to help participants find full or part time employment.[14] Participants are required to treat Job Club as if it were an actual job: dress appropriately, report on time, and participate actively in a series of workshops.

During the first week of Job Club, recipients participate in a job-finding skills workshop. During the next two weeks, they must engage actively in supervised job search; they make calls to prospective employers using phone banks and travel to job interviews. During the time when our surveys and focus groups were conducted, the goal for Job Club participants was 50 calls and five interviews per day.[15] However, recent information provided by LACOE, the contractor that provides these services for DPSS, indicates that as of July 2000, the daily requirements for participants are to find 5 employers who are hiring, and participate in at least 3 job applications or interviews per day.[16]

- **The requirements of Job Club impose travel demands on participants that are difficult to meet even with adequate transportation. Consistently, participants express that getting to and from job interviews, job applications, and Job Club is a complicated task, especially on public transportation. Three-fifths of those using transit and almost one-third of those using cars find travel for job search to be difficult.**

These difficulties lead, in some cases, to unintended consequences: a number of focus group participants reported conducting their job searches close to home, aware that these would be lower paying, less desirable jobs.

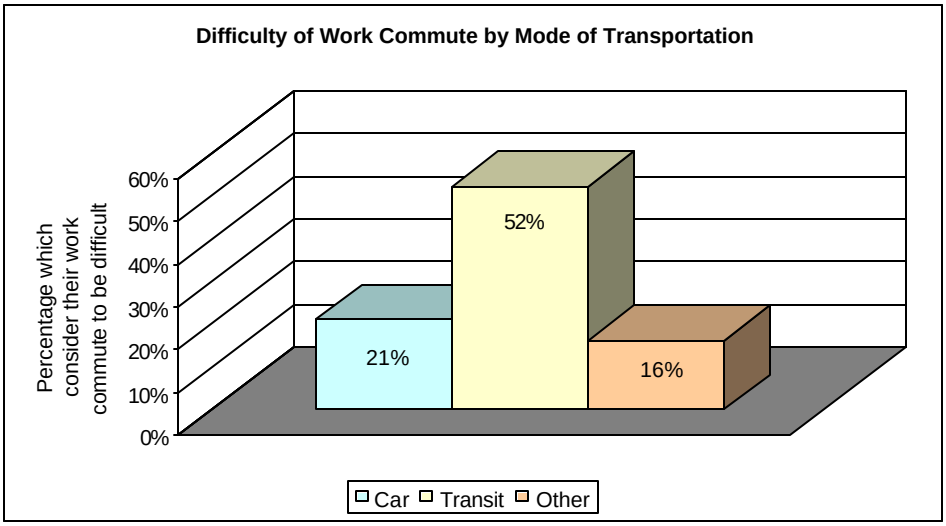
While we do not have information about the number of participants who "fall back" out of the job search stage, that is, stop seeking work, we can assume that a number do so because of the difficulties associated with transportation. Active transportation assistance at this stage could reduce such failures, and help make this process less stressful.

Employment

Once a participant has found employment, travel tends to become less complex. The daily pattern is more established, and travel becomes more routine. The commute to work is usually perceived as relatively easy for those who use cars, but half of those relying on transit consider it to be difficult (see Figure 19). As we have seen, participants usually perceive commuting to work on public transit as a burden.

The rates of car ownership and usage are higher among employed participants than among the other two groups. As mentioned earlier, having access to a car facilitates finding and securing jobs. However it is also quite likely that employment allows participants to purchase cars.

Figure 19



Source: CTNA Survey, 2000.

Most welfare-to-work participants find jobs at an average of 7 miles from home[17], a distance that is lower than the average one-way commute for the population at large (12-13 miles).[18] However, even short distances may take a long time on public transit, especially if the person must transfer from one bus to another. Among respondents in the survey, those who took transit to work spent more than double the travel time of those who traveled by car. Additionally, many

participants work weekends (57 percent) and non-standard hours (40 percent), making their commutes even more difficult on public transit, and increasing the number of safety concerns.

Once a participant is employed, more traditional forms of carpooling and vanpooling are possible, at least for those who work regular hours. There is no reason that employed GAIN participants could not take advantage of such services, which could assist those where transit service is less frequent or unreliable. Ride-share service providers should be encouraged to work closely with DPSS staff to place participants who work regular schedules.

Although DPSS provides some assistance for transportation costs for welfare-to-work activities (bus passes, mileage reimbursement, cash for fare, etc.), only about one-tenth of participants report having received these payments. In some cases, the current reimbursement does not cover the full cost of such travel, a fact mentioned by a number of focus group participants.

- **Additional transportation assistance seems to be necessary to help participants, especially during the job search phase. It is during job search that participants face the greatest transportation difficulties, and where innovative programs can possibly yield very positive results. Creative programs, such as vans that drive groups of job seekers to potential employment sites, may facilitate the process and help participants find and secure employment.**

Conclusion

The travel behaviors of the welfare-to-work population are complex, and driven by a variety of factors: where they live, what stage of the process they find themselves in, and their available resources. This research has identified a series of transportation deficiencies that are centered around neighborhood characteristics, the method of travel selected, the types of family-related trips which are required, and transportation needs which are generated by the requirements of the system and process itself.

While we have characterized the research by four major categories, it is important to understand that these are really overlapping, and that the welfare-to-work population is not one, but many separate segmented groups. GAIN participants may be segmented by where they live, the type of transportation available to them, where they are in the welfare-to-work process, what hours they work (if any), and the nature of their other family commitments, among other distinguishing characteristics. The transportation needs and requirements of each group will be different, and programs to reduce transportation barriers should acknowledge this diversity.

As we have seen, a significant number of the current GAIN participants are severely handicapped by where they live relative to existing public transportation services and the location of potential jobs. Because of the expense of fixed route transit, extension of existing services to some of these areas may not be economically feasible, and as a result, more creative programs may need to be devised to address these neighborhood deficiencies.

Surveys conducted as part of this research revealed a strong willingness of various community based organizations to become more actively involved in addressing some of the transportation problems of the GAIN population. Vans run by community based organizations together with formal and informal carpools and vanpools could help bridge some of these gaps. In addition, coordination with other Counties to identify potential jobs across County borders could open up additional resources available to the welfare-to-work population.

Throughout the research, it was clear that there is an overwhelming preference for travel by car among current GAIN participants. This should not be surprising given the flexibility and convenience that autos provide in meeting a variety of transportation needs. Those who travel by private automobile (either as a driver or passenger) have a considerably easier time in all stages of the welfare-to-work process, and with other supportive trips.

Further, auto ownership is highly correlated with employment status, and those with cars are much more likely to be employed. While this creates a strong demand for auto-ownership among the GAIN population, for many, their existing resources will preclude this as an option.

The issue of car purchase and loan programs is a complex one. It is clear that there is considerable demand for such options both among the welfare-to-work population, and among advocacy groups on their behalf. It is just as clear that available public resources will not be sufficient to fully accommodate that demand. A variety of loan and purchase options should be carefully evaluated, with the understanding that such programs will need to be carefully targeted to selected participants at particular stages of the transition to self sufficiency.
On the other hand, because of the importance of an auto in securing and keeping a job, car maintenance programs may be a rather cost effective means of ensuring employment and perhaps job tenure for those who have older, less reliable automobiles. Because car maintenance programs may also benefit air quality, there is the possibility of leveraging other available funds that are more specifically addressed to air quality purposes.

Given the perceived difficulties utilizing public transit, there was considerable demand and use of auto passenger trips among those without consistent access to an automobile. This was largely a response to lower levels of transit service, and generally substituted for public transit. Participants generally rely on family and networks of friends, together with various informal "carpools" and "taxi" services. While these are less reliable and predictable than auto-ownership, they nevertheless represent a quite viable and expanding set of services that serve their low-income communities.

It is clear that such informal carpools and taxis may represent a cost-effective response to the relative lack of existing services, and should be acknowledged in the formulation of policy programs addressing the transportation needs of the welfare-to-work population. This should include the payment of transportation assistance directly to the participant, so that they may contract directly for such services.

Those who have to rely on public transit face the greatest difficulties among GAIN participants. Improvements in reliability and frequency of service could address a number of issues raised by welfare-to-work participants, particularly in those areas in which the GAIN population is

concentrated. Additionally, expansion of service in some select areas may be warranted by the increased demand brought about by the welfare-to-work population, as they move into the labor force. Finally, providing information about schedules and trip planning information could help to reduce many of the fears and difficulties reported by some participants, as they navigate to unknown neighborhoods for job interviews.

The evidence is clear that welfare-to-work participants face the greatest number of transportation difficulties while in the job search phase of the transition to work. The requirements of the welfare-to-work program generate new transportation needs for participants that are not met by the services provided. Job search is likely to be difficult, not just because of the greater transportation needs, but because of a whole complex of demands made upon participants. Transportation assistance will likely have the greatest impact at this stage of the process.

While we have highlighted specific transportation needs and deficiencies, just as crucial is the need to facilitate coordination between various government agencies, transportation providers, employers and service users. This is founded on the assumption that the transportation obstacles that confront the welfare-to-work population are complex, and mitigating these problems will require a variety of solutions implemented on a range of scales. To be successful, programs will necessarily need to involve the cooperation and participation of all relevant social service agencies together with the welfare-to-work population in a coordinated fashion.

But perhaps most importantly, we must recognize that transportation policies alone cannot be expected to achieve the transition for CalWORKs participants from public assistance to employment. Transportation assistance programs should be part of an integrated set of policies that include supportive services, child care, post employment services, diversion programs, economic development, housing assistance, and education and work force readiness to strengthen the capacity of welfare families to transition from public assistance to long term family self sufficiency.

Endnotes

[1] The terms welfare-to-work population and GAIN population are used interchangeably throughout this document. GAIN is the employment / training component of welfare-to-work in Los Angeles County, which was implemented prior to the initiation of welfare reform. Once a relatively small optional program, GAIN is now the primary programmatic vehicle for employment, training and placement, and is a requirement for nearly all non-exempt CalWORKs participants. The program requires welfare recipients to participate in various welfare-to-work activities aimed at helping them secure employment.

[2] Patricia Hu and Jennifer Young, *Summary of Travel Trends, 1995 Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey*, working paper, Oak Ridge National Lab, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, January 8, 1999.

[3] Internal analyses conducted by MTA staff, and reported in written communication by Ashok Kumar of the Transit Planning Section.

[4] This estimate is based on a combination of survey questions that offer a very approximated measure of the time spent between initially leaving home one particular morning, and the time the participant is usually scheduled to begin work. This measure should therefore be taken with caution. It may include trip chains that the participant engaged in before reaching work (such as dropping off children at childcare), and arrangements to meet bus schedules (time may be spent waiting for transit, in transfers, or participants may arrive at their workplace earlier than needed because of transit schedules).

[5] Paul Ong. "Work and Car Ownership Among Welfare Recipients." *Social Work Research*, Vol. 2, No. 4, p. 255-262, December 1996.

[6] Robert Cervero, Onesimo Sandoval and John Landis. *The Value of Transportation in Stimulating Welfare-to-Work Transitions: Evidence from San Francisco*. Paper prepared for the Annual Meeting of the Transportation Research Board, July, 1999.

[7] Steven Raphael and Lorien Rice. *The Effect of Car Ownership on the Employment Rates of Welfare Recipients and Low Skilled Women: Evidence from Quasi-Experiments*. Paper presented at The Journey to Work: UCLA Symposium on Welfare Reform and Transportation, Los Angeles, CA, April 6-7, 2000.

[8] Lyn Hunstad. *Characteristics of Uninsured Motorists*, California Department of Insurance, Sacramento, February 1999. [INTERNET, WWW] www.insurance.ca.gov/PRP/Policy_Research/Auto/char_um.pdf [Accessed 06/01/00].

[9] Unfortunately, there is no detailed longitudinal study on the dynamics in the change in car-ownership status. One study using data for AFDC recipients finds that over a period of approximately two years, a quarter of owners lost their cars and a fifth of non-owners became owners (Doug Miller and Paul Ong. *Technical Report: Analysis of Transportation Access and Employment Using Q5 and Related Surveys*, unpublished paper, UCLA Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies, Los Angeles, CA, November 1999).

[10] Household transportation expenditures dramatically increase as families move from public assistance to work. Transportation expenditures are more than four times higher for public assistance families that have at least one working member compared to families receiving aid that have no workers, going from about $1,000 per year to about $4,000 per year (William D. Passero, "Spending Patterns of Families Receiving Public Assistance," Monthly Labor Review, Vol. 119, No. 4, p. 21-28, April, 1996). Among families that receive public assistance and do not have working members, transportation expenses account for about 10% of total household expenditures, compared to nearly 20% for public assistance families with a working member. The jump in expenditure level as families enter the workforce from public assistance is driven by an increased reliance on autos.

[11] Michael Cameron. "Transportation Efficiency and Equity in Southern California: Are They Compatible?" In Robert d. Bullard and Glenn S. Johnson (Eds.) *Just Transportation: Dismantling Race and Class Barriers to Mobility*. Stony Creek, CT: New Society Publishers, 1997.

[12] Evelyn Blumenberg, Steven Moga and Paul Ong. *Getting Welfare Recipients to Work: Transportation and Welfare Reform. Summary of Conference Proceedings.* Los Angeles, CA: UCLA School of Public Policy and Social Research, 1998, p. 19.

[13] These non-working, non-seeking participants, may or may not be involved in other welfare-to-work activities.

[14] Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) is the contractor that conducts Job Club for DPSS.

[15] L.A. GAIN Program Handbook, County of Los Angeles, Department of Public Social Services, M/L#1, Issue #1, Issued 2-26-99, section 712.1. Also see http://dpss.co.la.ca.us/gain/jss.cfm.

[16] This data was provided by Mary Williams, LACOE Coordinator for GAIN Job Services; email message to one of the authors, August 24, 2000.

[17] This number is based on rectangular distance, not actual travel distance.

[18] National estimates of travel distance are based on the 1995 Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey (NPTS). See Patricia Hu and Jennifer Young, *Summary of Travel Trends, 1995 Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey*, working paper, Oak Ridge National Lab, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, January 8, 1999.